



Arizona Department of Education
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal

For Immediate Release

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Native American Language Teacher Certification Paving Way for Elders to Teach Native American Languages in Classroom

Adoption of Native American Language Teacher Certification Policy

(Phoenix, AZ—August 28, 2012) Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal announced today that a new *Native American Language Certification Policy R7-2-614J*, developed jointly by the Arizona Department of Education and the Native American Tribes, was unanimously adopted by the State Board of Education.

In discussions at the State Superintendent Huppenthal's *Native American Advisory Group*, members of various Native American tribes, communities and nations came together to voice their concern with an education bureaucracy that challenged their ability to pass on their native language and culture to future generations of Native American students. These discussions led to a partnership between the Arizona Department of Education and Arizona's Tribal Governments. This partnership has now enabled Native Language speakers to be certified to teach their Native languages in Arizona classrooms.

The Native American Advisory Committee to Superintendent Huppenthal made recommendations to establish a Native Language Teacher Certificate on September 21, 2011. In rapid response to the committee's recommendation a proposed rule to establish a Native Language teacher certificate was drafted. On October 5th this draft rule was considered by the Certification Advisory Committee which unanimously voted to forward the proposed rule to be considered for adoption by the State Board of Education. It was officially adopted today and now goes into immediate effect. The Navajo Nation is already a participating Tribal government. Other tribes in Arizona are currently taking action to draft proficiency assessments and have declared intentions to participate in this government to government partnership. There are 22 tribal governments in Arizona.

"I am pleased with the unwavering support of the State Board of Education in supporting this new policy. These Native American languages are in danger of becoming extinct. It is imperative that we

work to support Native American communities in their efforts to preserve their languages through the generations,” stated Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal.

“I’d like to thank the Department of Education and Superintendent Huppenthal for supporting Native American language programs and its traditional teachers,” said State Board member Jacob Moore. “This is a historical event that honors the recognition of Native American languages in our education system and will be well received by Tribal Nations and Communities throughout the state.”

The new policy allows for individuals with Native American language proficiency, whose proficiency is verified by their own tribal assessments, to apply for a Native Language Teacher Certificate at the Arizona Department of Education. Other requirements would include a finger print clearance card, an application fee and be subject to renewal requirements consistent with other teacher certificates under section R7-2-614. The policy goes into immediate effect and is anticipated as a new avenue for elders and other non-degreed language experts to teach only native language(s) to students in Arizona schools. Many of these languages are critically endangered and at risk for extinction if not taught to Native American Youth.

“The new Native American Language Certification will help us preserve and maintain our language,” said Kathy Kitcheyan, Apache language mentor teacher at San Carlos Unified School District. “I’d like to thank the Superintendent and State Board for having the Native American Advisory Committee and for moving this forward. This was a long time coming.”

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